
IRAQI DESTINY

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Spc. Joshua M. Risner

Soldiers teach Iraqi orphans how to properly do the push-up. Children were enthused to participate and befriend the troops.

Summer fun

Soldiers make lasting impression on Al Quosh orphans

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner
40th PAD

A group of 29 orphaned Iraqi children from Al Quosh came to visit soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), June 17 in Mosul.

It was an opportunity for the "Widowmakers," who have conducted several combat operations in Iraq to relax a little and interact with Iraqis of a different sort than they're used to, according Maj. William Fedak, executive

officer, 3rd 502nd Inf. Rgt.

"The soldiers here are volunteering their time and their friendship and 'adopting' kids from the orphanage," Fedak said. "It's sort of like the Big Brother, Big Sister program back in the states. We hope it will give them good opinions about the U.S. soldiers in Iraq."

The children got a tour of the battalion staging area that included stops at the dining facility and first aid station.

After the initial tour, the children were invited to participate in a soldierly activity: physical training.

"Widowmaker" soldiers assembled in a

formation and took the children in to their ranks.

Then, they taught them a few exercises, such as the side straddle hop, the push up and the sit up. After some PT, the troops spread out for some fun and games such as football and soccer. Following that, they took the opportunity to cool off from the blazing Iraqi sun by taking a plunge in the pool.

"I think it's a good thing we're doing," said Spc. Isaiah McCloud, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd 502nd Inf. Rgt. "It's pretty fun and it shows the world that the Army isn't just about killing, it's about helping too."

Air Assault:

Maintenance soldiers work to keep 101st helicopters flying

By Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

Working tirelessly in the burning sun, soldiers of the Maintenance Platoon, Company B, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) keep the 101st helicopters ready to fly with a process called "Phase Maintenance."

Every 400 flight hours a helicopter, the 7th Battalion of the 101st Aviation Regiment works with CH-47 Chinooks, must be turned over to Staff Sgt. Bobby Miller, phase maintenance team leader, and his soldiers.

"We have a phase maintenance book that needs to be filled out every phase," said Miller, a native of Grand Prairie, Texas. "We usually get that book, start looking through it and look at the aircraft in sections. From that point, we determine what maintenance needs to be done."

Aircraft are examined thoroughly for deficiencies, according to Miller. The aircraft are disassembled in certain sections, including the rotors, which are removed entirely. "Normally, we go a little beyond and above. There are some things that aren't in the book that need to be done."

The phase maintenance process, according to Miller, usually takes about 30-45 days. "We've been doing this in 14...It's amazing how motivated these guys are."

Both Miller and his soldiers cited supplies as a standing problem for the unit. Missing parts have been extremely hard to come by as the slow mail service has sometimes prevented swift repairs.

"If these aircrafts weren't maintained correctly," according to Spc. Craig Emert of Echo, Ore. "We wouldn't be doing our job."

The maintenance team has deployed with 101st pilots for seven months in Kosovo, and seven months in Afghanistan. Miller and his soldiers were only at Fort Campbell two weeks before leaving for Kuwait for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I know there are morale issues," said Miller. "It's hard. We overcome it the best we can."



Pfc. Thomas Day

Spc. Brent Jost of Beedford, Ind., 7-101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), performs a phase maintenance check on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

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Pfc. Thomas Day

Sgt. First Class Lonnie Hardin of Knoxville, Ark., 431st Civil Affairs and his linguist, Fayz "Vic" Younis Dabbagh, have become like "cousins" over the past two months in Mosul. Hardin and his family are working to get Dabbagh, who was born in Kansas, back to the United States with his family.

Civil Affairs sergeant helps reunite linguist with family

By Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

Fayz Younis Dabbagh, a U.S. citizen working as a linguist with the 431st Civil Affairs Battalion in Mosul, will be reunited with his family in Kansas after 13 years and five decades of trying to get back to the U.S., thanks to some help from a man he calls his "cousin."

Sgt. First Class Lonnie Hardin of Knoxville, Ark., 431st CABn., was introduced to Dabbagh as a prospective linguist for his unit last April. Dabbagh quickly told Hardin his story and asked if there was any way the Army could help.

"I told him, 'I got a passport,'" said Dabbagh, who the 431st soldiers refer to as Vic. "I'm trying to get enough money to bring my family."

Dabbagh was born in Topeka, Kan., in 1951 to an American mother and an Iraqi father, both of whom were studying civil engineering at Kansas University. Two years later, he left Kansas with his family to live in Baghdad.

He has not been to the United States since.

For the last five decades Dabbagh has made a life for himself, his wife and three children in Baghdad and Mosul as his brothers and sisters left with their mother to live in the States. Dabbagh's father died in 1978 and his mother left to live in Kansas City in 1990. His sister was the last to leave in 1995.

The family, half the world away from Dabbagh in Kansas City, suffered through the war wondering if Vic was ok. "We had to get in touch with (Hardin's) family to let my family know that my family and I were okay," he said.

Hardin's family, who also lives in

Kansas, and Dabbagh's family have become close over the past few months. Hardin's wife Linda has sent Visa applications for Dabbagh's wife and kids over the mail to her husband that should arrive shortly. Dabbagh received his passport two years ago.

"(Linda) got to meet his family," Hardin said. "Their family considers me as a cousin. My family is a part of their family."

Dabbagh now tentatively plans to fly with his family back to the United States through the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, Syria, before Hardin redeploys back to Little Rock, Ark., with the rest of the 431st.

"Of course I'm looking forward to this, I haven't seen them in 13 years," Dabbagh said. He recalled a trip he made as a student to London as the closest he ever made it to the U.S. "I got all the way to England but never got past the Atlantic."

"Now you're going to get that chance," Hardin responded.

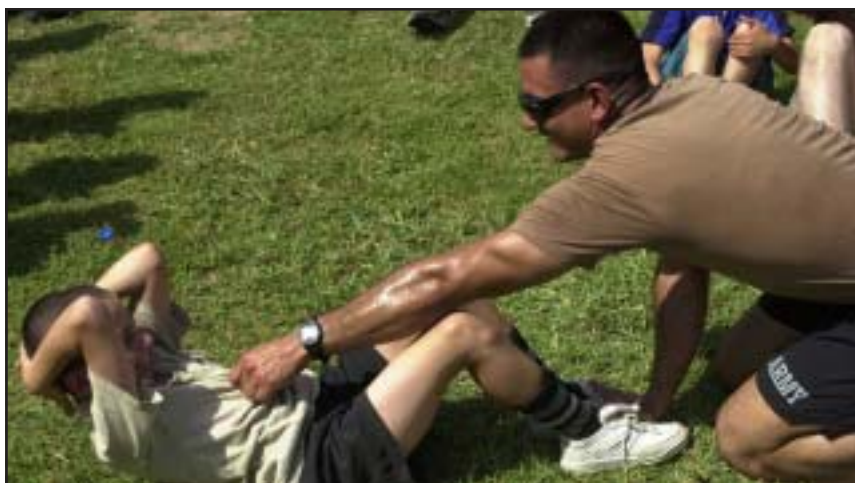
Just hanging around



(Above) A child gets a ride to the pool courtesy of Spc. Isaiah McCloud, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). (Right) One little boy decides to simply hang out for a minute.



Photo by Spc. Joshua M. Risner



(Right) A soldier helps an Iraqi orphan into the pool. After many activities in the hot sun, the orphans were more than welcome to cool off by taking a plunge. (Left) An Iraqi orphan receives an assisted sit up from a soldier with 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).



Bolts, belts, headaches & more

By Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

With Iraqi sun beating down on vehicles and generators to the tune of 100 degrees and hotter, soldiers may find it imperative to take heed in the words of advice from the mechanics of Headquarters and Headquarters Company Division, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

"Make sure you do your operator level Preventative Maintenance Checks and Service," said Cpl. Nick Degreek of Columbia Falls, Mont., a generator mechanic. "If your generator dies, don't do your PMCS then!"

101st soldiers, who started the deployment in the sandstorms of Kuwait, now must deal with the heat of Mosul that will only get more intense when the division redeploys through the same place it started. Vehicles and generators, according to the mechanics, must be cleaned and checked preemptively for deficiencies often.

"There could be a lot of reasons your truck won't start," said Sgt. Terri Griffith of Lafayette, La., a vehicle mechanic. "Make sure the PMCS is done and check with us when your service is due."

Both Degreek, who just joined the ranks of the non-commissioned officer corps this month, and Griffith stressed that a missing part may not be provided by the unit as promptly as at Fort Campbell, Ky.

"It's hard for me to get parts out here," Degreek said. With the division's current remote location, receiving parts may take as long as the often snail-paced mail service.

Tires also have been providing headaches for Griffith and his vehicle mechanics. "People have been running through the tires like crazy. Humvees aren't made for the highway."

While neither Degreek or Griffith have not encountered too many problems with overheating vehicles and generators, which may come to a surprise to soldiers melting in the Iraqi sun, the mechanics warned of possible issues on the horizon.

"The best thing I could say is to keep a camo-net over (your generator) to keep it cooler," Degreek advised.

Degreek did caution that even taking all the precautionary measures may not prevent your vehicles having issues with the summer heat.

Degreek, Griffith and the other HHC Division mechanics are operating in the 101st Division-Main element at what was once a palace occupied by former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

101st Screaming Eagle Profile



1st Lt. Vincent Calmes

Hometown - Baton Rouge, La.
Date of Birth - July 27, 1977
Note - LSU Tigers, New Orleans Saints fan
Unit - 3rd Plt., Co. A, 3-327th Inf. Rgt., 101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.)

By Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

In August of 2001, Vincent Calmes graduated Louisiana State University and was commissioned second lieutenant, having previously served in the Army National Guard before enrolling at LSU as a Reserve Officer Training Corps cadet.

A month later, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, Calmes saw first hand America's determination to fight terror as a "Gold Bar" recruiter.

"Before September 11, it was hard," Calmes said of his recruiting mission. "After September 11, people would come to us and ask how they could get into the military. I was pretty angry, I think everyone was."

Now Calmes serves as a platoon leader for the 3rd Platoon, Company A, 3rd Battalion of the 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Calmes and his platoon are currently posted at the Civil/Military Operations Center in Mosul.

"It's a high threat area," Calmes said. "The number of people who come in to get claims, (we're) making sure they're safe to enter."

Four of Calmes soldiers narrowly escaped injury June 14 when a grenade was thrown from a passing vehicle as the soldiers were pulling guard on the CMOC. Spc. Eric Corrales, Spc. Paul Joseph, Pfc. Josh Wolfgram and Pfc. David Tommarelo quickly returned fire at the vehicle, although it is unclear whether they were able hit their target.

It was hardly the first time that soldiers from Calmes' platoon were in harm's way. Calmes and his platoon fought with forces liberating the cities of An Najaf, Baghdad and Mosul.

"I just think I've been given a great opportunity. I'm definitely more confident as a platoon leader."

Calmes has not made any long terms career plans in the military, although he does not discount the possibility that he will serve well beyond his service requirement.

"As far as a career, I'm kind of undecided...I like where I am so far, I have no regrets."

Calmes has a younger brother serving as a junior officer in the Korean Peninsula with 217th Field Artillery Regiment.

Man on the Street

Why do you think some Iraqi people don't like American forces? What can we do about it?



"They're probably angry because things aren't flowing as well as they did before the war," Spc. James Chambers of Phoenix, Ariz., Company A, 3-327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).



"Some of them are disciples of Saddam; stop them by force, there is no other way," Hazim Muhammed, Linguist.



"I don't think there's a cookie cutter answer to that question," Capt. Marcus Jackson of Columbia, Md., operations officer, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Civilian Military Operations Center.



"The only way that we can make them feel less angry is to solely shift responsibility to the civilian government," Maj. Ben Bigelow of Bellows Falls, Vt., operations officer, 37th Engineer Battalion (Fort Bragg, N.C.).



WATER, It's hot... Obviously!

And every time you start a conversation with your buddy about the weather, what he is really looking for is some sort of wisdom that can make the heat not so bad. Something that will make that pursuit for the next frosty beverage seem not so difficult.

You sit on guard duty as the day gets hotter and hotter, or conducting patrols around the city.

You are hot and tired, and the last thing you want is to open your water bottle and find that it is close to the boiling point.

Staff Sgt. Terrence Hall of Queens, N.Y., 511th Military Police Company out of Fort Drum, N.Y., has a bit of water bottle cooling advice that might just help.

"If you take your water bottle and put it into a wet sock, the water will cool down," Hall said.

Hall swears by the discovery.

"We started doing this while we were in the desert at Tallil Air Base," Hall said. "A specialist told us how when the water evaporates it becomes cooler. So, we tried wetting a sock, and it works. Nice cool water."

The trick actually works. The water isn't ice cold, but it cools off to a drinkable temperature, which makes it worthwhile.